October 15, 2019

Kathy Boockvar
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Pennsylvania Department of State
302 North Office Building, 401 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Bensalem Township, Bucks County

Dear Madame Secretary:

We are writing to you to alert you to what we believe to be a clear violation of campaign finance laws which has recently occurred in Bensalem Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Your Complainants, Jesse R. Sloane and Edward J. Tokmajian, both serve on Bensalem Township Council, where we took office in January of 2018. We are the only Democrats on Bensalem's five-member Township Council. Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo is a Republican as well.

What has occurred within the Township is the diversion of public monies derived from taxpayer funds for partisan purposes tied to the upcoming elections. By way of background, for a number of years, Bensalem has maintained a "Homeowner's Assistance Grant" program, whereby homeowners in the Township receive a check in the mail from the Township on an annual basis, which is intended to be used to subsidize the cost of home maintenance or repairs. The program enjoys unanimous support among the Township Council, ourselves included.

In previous years, the standard protocol was to send the checks to homeowners along with a letter from the Mayor, which typically acknowledged all Council members, as a matter of decorum if nothing else. Indeed, in the letter sent to homeowners in October of 2018, both of us were specifically referenced and acknowledged, although neither of us had actually voted on the budget the year before (since we had not been seated yet).

This year the checks were accompanied by a misleading and purely partisan letter from the Mayor, subsidized and paid for exclusively through use of Township resources and funds. A copy of the same is enclosed. The letter, printed on official Township letterhead and paid for by taxpayers, opens by thanking ***three*** of the five Bensalem councilmen – only the Republicans - for

their part in securing money for Bensalem residents by tying the December 2018 Budget vote with the Homeowner's Assistance Grant.

As a preliminary matter, we, Councilmen Jesse Sloane and Ed Tokmajian, are on the record in our unwavering support of the Homeowner's Assistance Grant. Furthermore, we have never opposed or voted against the Homeowner's Assistance Grant. Rather, in 2017, prior to being elected, we advocated and pushed for an increase to the Homeowne'rs Assistance Grant.

The Mayor's partisan attempt to imply that we voted against the grant program when we voted against the budget is knowingly false and purposefully misleading. The omission of our names was an intentional political maneuver meant to mislead and deceive Bensalem residents a month before the 2019 Municipal Election, in which two of the three Republicans are seeking re-election. It was obvious that it was the Mayor's intention to use this letter to help them in this upcoming election, and hurt our efforts by omitting our names from the letter.

In actuality, we had voted against the Mayor's budget because it covered up a multi-million-dollar budget deficit that will reduce funding and resources for emergency services, leaving them underfunded and ill-equipped to properly serve our community, or result in a staggering tax increase for Bensalem residents. While these budgetary matters are beyond the purview of your office, we feel that some context is necessary to understand the content and intent of the Mayor's letter.

While the Mayor's letter might be perfectly acceptable (misleading though it may be) as a piece of campaign literature paid for by independent campaign funds, that is not what has transpired here. To the contrary, Township funds were used. The letter was sent on Township letterhead and transmitted to residents on the Township's own dime, to the tune of thousands of dollars. These funds were simply misappropriated for partisan purposes from the public coffer in the Mayor's hope of maintaining an increasingly embattled Republican majority on Township Council. As such, we believe that this particular offense lies particularly within the jurisdiction of your office, and we are therefore requesting your office to investigate this matter further and to take appropriate action should illegal conduct have occurred.

Very truly yours,

Jesse R. Sloane

Edward J. Tokmajian

Township of Bensalem

Joseph DiGirolamo
Mayor

October 5, 2019

Dear Fellow Bensalem Homeowner:

On behalf of Councilmen Knowles, Kisselback and Pilieri, I am pleased to provide you with your 2019 Bensalem Township Homeowners Assistance Grant. I am equally pleased to inform you that thanks to the approval of my 2019 Budget by these three members of our Township Council, the Homeowners Assistance Grant Program is continuing this year in the amount of $300. Your Grant check is enclosed, and it is our hope that this will help you to maintain or improve your home.

We are also continuing the additional $150 Grant for Senior Citizens (65 and older) and Disabled Persons in 2019. As in the past, there are income eligibility requirements for these additional Grants, and an application must be submitted to the Township. Grant Applications are available in the Township Building or by calling (215) 633-3620.

We enjoy a great quality of life here in Bensalem, and I am proud that during my time as your Mayor, Bensalem has been recognized nationally and locally as "One of the 50 Best Places to Live in America", "One of the 100 Best Communities for Young People", and "A Model for America". This recognition is the direct result of the efforts of countless individuals and groups who every day devote their talents, time and energy to making and keeping Bensalem the place that nearly 65,000 residents have proudly chosen to make their home, raise their families, and enjoy their retirement years.

As always, please know that I consider it a privilege and an honor to serve as the Mayor of Bensalem Township, and that I will continue to work together every day to ensure that our community remains a place where we can all feel safe and be proud to call home.

If you have any questions regarding the 2019 Homeowners Assistance Grant, please call our Finance Department at (215) 633-3620, Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo

2400 Byberry Road, Bensalem, Pennsylvania 19020
215-633-3600 • fax 215-633-3609 • www.bensalempa.gov